

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 000209

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SUBJECT: CHIRAC LOOKS FORWARD TO 2005: THE TONE CHANGES,
THE VIEW REMAINS THE SAME.

REF: PARIS 00081

Classified By: DCM, Alex Wolff, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) SUMMARY. During his traditional New Year's address to the diplomatic corps in Paris January 6, President Chirac stated his desire for good relations with the U.S. and extended "friendly wishes" to President Bush in advance of his inauguration (President Bush and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan were the only leaders addressed specifically in the speech). Chirac said he looks forward to facing the world's challenges with the U.S., describing these challenges as "opportunities to illustrate the vitality of the transatlantic link." While the overall tone of Chirac's speech was positive and encouraging as regards both the U.S. and the transatlantic relationship, Chirac took the opportunity to stress issues on which France and the U.S. differ -- the importance of the Kyoto protocol and the establishment of an "international tax" to name two -- he finished with a reminder that "the multipolar reality of our world is becoming more and more obvious." Chirac's look forward to 2005 cites a myriad of challenges, among them how the international community will prepare for and administer emergency aid (a challenge brought to the forefront by the recent tsunami); establishing democracy in Iraq and the Middle East; bringing stability to the Ivory Coast and Darfour; reforming the United Nations; and dealing with the threat of nuclear proliferation and terrorism. END SUMMARY

Chirac, the U.S. and the Transatlantic Relationship

12. (U) Chirac's address took a conciliatory tone towards the U.S. and the transatlantic relationship which were mentioned specifically five times in the course of Chirac's 30 minute speech. Firstly, Chirac stated his intention to build a credible "Europe Defense" that will "contribute to strengthening the Atlantic Alliance;" he later congratulated President Bush, framing the world's challenges as "opportunities to illustrate the vitality of the transatlantic link;" and then spoke of the U.S. as a partner in dealing with Iran; a co-contributor with Europe for Global Fund replenishment and finally as an important world player which needs to be engaged regarding the Kyoto protocol. Chirac's opinions were not always in accord with U.S. positions, but the U.S. was portrayed throughout the speech as a partner.

The Tsunami and Administering International Aid

13. (U) Chirac used the recent tsunami as a means to highlight both French involvement on the world stage and shortcomings of the international community to act in pursuit of a common goal. He offered concrete examples of what France is doing in the region, stating that, at a ministerial meeting that he chaired just prior to his speech, he and French ministers decided to focus immediate efforts on providing access to drinking water and on preventing epidemics by setting up a field hospital in northern Sumatra and sending the helicopter carrier Jeanne d'Arc to the area.

14. (U) He followed by stressing France's perspective for providing aid, stating that at the Paris Club meeting on January 12, France will call for an immediate and interest-free moratorium on debt repayment for the countries of the region. For the worst-affected areas, he said, France will be proposing additional debt-relief measures following an assessment of reconstruction needs. He said that he has already submitted a proposal that the G8 adopt a generous and coordinated approach to these issues to the British G8 Presidency.

15. (U) Chirac said that in the upcoming January 7 meeting in Brussels the GOF would support a massive commitment by the EU to help the region by calling for all of the available resources to be brought together in a European Reconstruction Fund (see reftel for French Donor Support). He added that France, like its European partners, is prepared to mobilize the financial resources required for reconstruction based on need assessments that will be announced in donor conferences.

16. (U) However, for Chirac, the tsunami provided not only a means to discuss the efforts France has made and intends to make, but also the shortcomings of the international community to respond to such catastrophes. Chirac dusted off several long-standing proposals in his call for measures that he said would better prepare the world for future disasters. Included in his list of "innovative funding mechanisms" through which to increase development assistance was his old idea of "international taxation" which, he said, France would be raising this year in the G8 and the UN. (Chirac also brought up the international tax idea when discussing aid for developing nations in the context of reform of international institutions later in his speech.) He stated the need for a worldwide early-warning system and said that France would contribute to the development of such a network and the creation of a "humanitarian rapid reaction force" which, he said, should exist within the framework of the UN.

The Middle East: Iraq; Israel/Palestine; Lebanon

17. (U) Chirac said that the Middle East and Iraq are "the most urgent issues" to be faced in the coming year. He voiced his support for the political process set out in Resolution 1546 and the reconstruction of the country but was also careful to stress that all sectors of Iraqi society be given the opportunity to participate in that process, "it is essential that the largest possible number of Iraqis take part in it, thus demonstrating their rejection of violence." He underscored this by saying that "all parts of Iraqi society and all stakeholders in Iraqi political life" must be guaranteed "their rightful place in the country's future institutions," implicitly referring to the threatened boycott by Sunni groups.

18. (U) Chirac was measured and optimistic in his assessment of the Israeli/Palestinian situation. He praised both the "maturity of the Palestinian people" in finding a successor to Yasser Arafat and the "courageous decision by the Israeli government" to disengage from Gaza. While he stressed the importance that the withdrawal from Gaza be a success, he also said that the Palestinian Authority must meet its own responsibilities and that the withdrawal must be coordinated with the roadmap which, he said, "must be restarted immediately."

19. (U) As regards Lebanon, Chirac cited the implementation of Resolution 1559 as an example of further freeing the Middle East by "putting an end to outdated arrangements." Implementation of the resolution, he said, "will require our full attention, especially in the run-up to the legislative elections next spring."

Nonproliferation and Terrorism

10. (U) The threat of terrorism was not prominently addressed in his speech, although Chirac mentioned bioterrorism and cyberterrorism specifically as "new forms taken by the threat" which demand an increasingly effective response. He also said that France calls on the EU to be vigilant in destroying terrorist finance networks ('tax havens' in the speech) while remaining "in compliance with our values." The struggle, he added, must "address the roots of terrorism, which are first and foremost to be found in unresolved conflicts with their attendant injustice, misery and despair."

11. (U) Chirac suggested that the EU3's dealings with Iran is a template to be followed when preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. He said that countries abiding by their international nonproliferation obligations must be able to have the benefit of access to legal technologies while "we must be unwavering towards those who fail to live up to their commitments." These principles, he said, guide the EU3 in negotiations of a long-term agreement with Iran, in cooperation with other partners in the EU, Russia, the US and China.

Making International Institutions More Effective

12. (U) Echoing many of the same sentiments he expressed when addressing the international community's ability to respond to disasters, and that he has put forward repeatedly in speeches over the past year, Chirac stressed the necessity to make international institutions more efficient and effective. He said that the United Nations is the only universal forum for regulating international relations; he praised Kofi Annan as "a man of peace, conviction, courage and integrity;" and said "2005 must be the year of UN reform." He stated that next September's UN summit meeting will present an opportunity to implement reforms outlined by

the Panel of Eminent Persons. He reiterated France's support of Security Council expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories; creation of an economic and social governance policy forum and a UN Environment Organization; reinforcement of post-conflict management capabilities; and further progress in the protection of human rights.

¶13. (U) Chirac mentioned another international tax, this time in the context of development financing. He said that the September Summit must be used to make the decision to double concessional financing and that he would continue to work with Brazil, Chile, Spain and others to develop this and other "innovative mechanisms" which are necessary to make this happen. He argued that an international tax could also support anti-AIDS initiatives. He said that it is essential to raise an annual amount of three billion dollars at the Global Fund Replenishment Conference in March, with the EU, the US and other donors each contributing a third of the total amount. Chirac added that France will be hosting an international conference in June on microcredit, which he said needs to be increased tenfold in the coming year.

¶14. (U) Chirac said that the G8 Summit in Gleneagles will provide an opportunity to engage the US on the Kyoto Protocol, which will enter into force on February 16. He said the needs of emerging countries must also be addressed, as they must in concluding the Doha round of the WTO.

¶15. (U) In discussing Europe, Chirac mentioned the cultural diversity convention currently under negotiation in UNESCO. He said that he has asked the government to organize a meeting of European cultural leaders in Paris this spring.

"2005 will be a decisive year for the future of Europe."

¶16. (U) Chirac spoke positively of the European Constitution, the referendum for which will be held before the summer break. French citizens, he said, "will look back and contemplate how far we have come in the last half-century." The Constitution, he said, will "lend new force to the European economic and social model to withstand the strong winds of globalization." The Constitution, he added, will also give Europe a solid framework through which to develop ambitious policies, suggesting that the example of Airbus already points the way (he added he will be in Toulouse on January 18 with the Federal Chancellor and the Prime Ministers of Britain and Spain to attend the official roll-out of the A380). He also noted that the joint fusion project, ITER, which he said should be located in Cadarache (France), will place Europe on the cutting edge of the "drive to acquire energies of the future."

¶17. (U) As regards the integration of Turkey he said, "our objective is indeed to prepare for Turkish accession." But, "we cannot rule out the possibility of a different outcome if that country is not able, or willing, to see the process through to its conclusion."

Media Reaction

¶18. (U) French and international press made note of Chirac's remarks, seeing in them an effort to reach out to the U.S. Left-leaning Liberation headlined that Chirac was "making eyes" at the U.S., while the FT concluded: "Chirac keen to mend relations with the U.S." The Financial Times reported that Chirac's speech revealed a range of forward-looking proposals "so freshly designed that they even seemed to catch some of his own ministers off-guard," while recent reporting in Liberation suggests that Chirac is pushing his focus on the coming ten years because he has achieved so little in the ten years he has already spent in office.

The Fundamental Shift - Tone

¶19. (C) COMMENT. Chirac's views put forward on January 6 are not particularly new -- as he has on many occasions, he expressed his desire to increase the competitiveness of Europe and sees the Constitution as a fundamental prerequisite for doing so. He repeated his view that the UN is the sole forum for reconciling international disputes and said he wants to implement reforms that will empower it. He ratcheted up his rhetoric to generate development funds through an international tax. There is, however, a new, more positive tone in his remarks about the U.S., which he describes as a partner in the effort to meet global challenges. The question now is whether this change is merely rhetorical, designed to create a better atmosphere. Or, whether Chirac intends to take concrete steps to give substance to the new tone.

120. (U) A copy of the full text of Chirac's speech has been
faxed to EUR/WE.

Leach